

MAY 2024

Issue 701

1. Chairman's foreword



As I write this report, there remains no clear-cut winner in the Premier League, making each week's results that bit more important and exciting! Manchester City's potential for points punishment has now dropped into at least next year - relegation seems on the cards but is the maximum penalty. Maybe the Rule changes that are being considered will confuse the outcome. Let's hope we get a fair outcome for the betterment of football.

Our April meeting with Stephen Matthews- a Level 4 Referee was an interesting discussion around video match incidents. Differing views emerged and we all learnt something with great audience participation. Thanks to all attending.

Next meeting – Our Annual General Meeting

Looking forward to seeing you on Thursday 9th May for our Annual General Meeting. I very much hope that you will support this event and following the formal part of the meeting there will be an opportunity to discuss with the Committee any issues that you may want to raise. Your first drink at the Bowling Club will be paid for by the Society! So don't miss it!

Best regards
David Norman
Chair

2. Report of the April meeting – Stephen Matthews – Game Management

Stephen has a rather unique perspective in this area as whilst he has been refereeing since the age of 14 he has also been coaching for the AFC Wimbledon Foundation since the age of 16. He has been operating as a Level 4 referee for the last 6 seasons.

Although this was another interactive evening, the series of clips presented by Stephen were all of his own matches where he had gone back and reflected on certain incidents and taken away some development points to help his own game going forward.

The three clips shown by him dealt with three distinctive areas involving:

- A rash challenge
- A goal mouth scramble at a corner
- Foul challenge leading to a melee and suspension in play

There were some recurring themes in the feedback and summary of each clip including:

- Take your time
Ensure that you do not rush your decisions or feel pressured into making them. Remember that you as the Referee control when play will restart and it is far more important that you use this time to analyse what has been seen and make an informed decision.
- Use all the information available
Identifying and gathering reliable and relevant information is one of the most important aspects of any decision-making process. This is not only what you yourself see with your own eyes but can include the reactions of players, the strength of signal provided by an Assistant and any initial “gut” reaction.
- Remain calm
Body language is a key element here with a calm demeanour communicating to players that you are in control and will help better manage their expectations and take some heat out of the position. This was particularly important in clip 3 where the suspension in play arose following the melee that involved an act of serious misconduct and an accusation of the use of racist language. Stephen, having not heard what was said, had to explain the protocols to both managers and captains, taking his time to ensure that all participants were aware of what was happening and minimise the potential for further misconduct.

Stephen finished his presentation by discussing some of the changes that he has made to his own game in recent seasons.

He freely admitted that, with a coaches hat on, his game management style was one of “commentating on the game” rather than communicating with participants in the game but the coaching role has helped him read the game better and meant that he is making better use of fitness levels - reducing his average running in a game from approx 19 km to 12 km.

Managing the game better has not only benefitted Stephen it has also, he feels, been appreciated by players as better decisions are being made.

He did stress that there is no substitute for maintaining proximity to better “sell” decisions with Stephen suggesting maintaining a distance from play of between 10-15m and a 45 degree viewing angle.

Stephen's willingness to present clips of his own matches and let those present effectively critique his decision making in order to benefit them was fully appreciated and the Vote of Thanks was given by Geoff Turner.

Post meeting comment:

We were joined on the evening by a young lady attending her first Society meeting who contacted Geoff Turner to say:

*"Thank you for a lovely evening I thoroughly enjoyed it. So did my dad.
Thank you for letting him come as well. Will definitely come again."*

To all those who have recently been registered with the Society - please bear this in mind and we hope to see you in September.



3. FORMAL NOTICE OF OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

In accordance with our current Society Rules, we hereby give formal notice of the upcoming Society AGM. This will be held at the Croydon Bowling Club on Thursday 9 th May 2024 at 7.30pm for a 7.45pm start. All members are very welcome to attend.

NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULE CHANGES

Also in accordance with our current Rules, we give notice that the Committee are proposing an update to the Rules of Society. The existing and proposed Rules were provided in separate documents attached to the April copy of the Ray. The reason for updating the rules is to have a modernized set reflecting the changes that have occurred in our Society over the last 7 years and to align with the National Referees Association guidelines for Local Societies.

NOTICE OF PROPOSED NOMINATIONS

The Committee would also give notice of nominations, duly submitted to the Society Secretary for the following positions: -

1. To elect Stephen Maguire as a Life Vice President for services to the Society – proposed by David Roper and seconded by Geoff Turner
 2. To elect David Roper as a Vice President of the Society – proposed by Steve Maguire and seconded by David Norman.
 3. All Officers and Committee members have agreed to continue in their positions.
 4. Please note that Steve Watson has agreed to permanently act as the Editor for the Ray – replacing Steve Tyler who has been the editor for many years.
- No other nominations have been received.

Future Committee Members

If you would be interested in joining the committee and contributing your thoughts and ideas please contact the Society Secretary for further information.

4. Secretary's Report 2023/24

I hope that you have all had a successful season and that the team you support has done well. Once again another “interesting” season in the wonderful world of football. We had the sickening assault on the Turkish referee, Umut Meler, but then we saw Rebecca Welch make her refereeing debut on the Premier League whilst Sam Allinson became the first black referee to attain the top level since Uriah Rennie in 2008.

It has been a good year for our local professional and semi-professional teams. Crystal Palace have flourished under the recent change of management in the shape of the Austrian Oliver Glasner. What a revelation in playing style and 3 consecutive wins all against teams in the top 8 has brought renewed hope for the future. I write this having ventured to W6 to witness a Jeffrey Schlupp screamer secure a point at the Cottage.

Croydon FC won their first trophy for many a year winning the London Senior Trophy. This followed on the back of a narrow defeat in the Kent Senior Trophy final and a comfortable 8th position in the Southern Counties East Football League which had been dominated by AFC Whyteleafe who won the league by 8 points.

And then, of course, there is the exciting prospect of success across the border at Bromley FC. Having reached 3rd place in the Vanarama National League, their highest ever finish, they make their 3rd Wembley appearance in 6 years but this time attempting to win promotion into the EFL. We wish them well for Sunday 5 May in their attempt to replace Sutton United in the big time.

It has been another successful year for obtaining guest speakers. It becomes quite difficult to attract interesting and high-quality speakers, particularly for those we have not seen before.

The meetings that seem to be well-received are those using video clips which allow for discussion and analysis.



We commenced the season with our customary review of the law changes which was once again admirably led by James Beal. In October we were delighted to receive a visit from Andy Bennett, EFL Assistant Referee, Chair of the County RA, and leading figure at Woking RA. His presentation was entitled “Get involved then Lino.”

He gave us the priorities of an AR;

- Offside; To give accurate offside flags, you must ensure that you are in line with the second last defender and that can be difficult. Positioning is of the essence. You need to be fit, work hard to give credibility to your decisions.
- Ball in and out play
- Fouls and misconduct. Eye contact and communication are key as you will not be thanked for too much interference. But you must step up and be bold when circumstances warrant your assistance.

November was the highlight of the season as we welcomed new-to-the-Premier League, referee Tim Robinson from Sussex. Having refereed over 400 football league games and in his 8th season he is now in great demand with appointments, including VAR duties. It was fascinating to learn about his fitness regime where his strength and conditioning coach may even suggest scaling down activities. On the Premier league he receives a data pack ahead of his next fixture detailing information about the two teams to help him with pre-match preparation. He reminded everyone to “be yourself” when officiating and then talked about 9 key points e.g. personality and resilience. He presented 2 video clips for discussion to round off a brilliant evening. December was a social evening ably led by Steve Maguire.

We kicked off 2024 with a double act involving our own Pat Jolliffe and Harry Yellen (Sutton Utd

supporter and follower) from the County Office where he helps Craig Hicks. A thought-provoking evening “less is more.” They posed a series of questions commencing with the law changes for this season and a series of video clips questioning, were things made over complicated.

Steve Worsley made a welcome return visit in February with his poser “What would you do?” The clips and the discussions generated were continued proof that refereeing is hard and mistakes will be made, especially when decisions are made in a split second with only one view.

Another welcome return in March saw Tim Lawrence speak about discipline and the On-field process. Consider the implications of decisions made quickly or slowly. To be brave, bold, and confident.

The overall process should ideally be;

- The first on the scene;
- Isolate the offender;
- Call treatment for any injured player;
- Move other players away from the area; and
- Make eye contact when issuing the disciplinary sanctions.

And finally in April we received a presentation from a younger Level 4 referee, Stephen Matthews. He presented 3 video clips for us to dissect and comment upon. As usual with video clips there were several differing opinions which made for an interesting evening. How will we ever achieve consistency?

I would like to pay tribute to the late Joe Chambers. This great, genial character was part of the training team through the Eighties and Nineties. His enthusiasm was endless and he served the County well. RIP.

And finally, we have recently learned that our Patron Dave Gowers is going into a care home. He has been an inspiration to Croydon Referees’ Society for so many decades and since losing Beryl, his loving wife, his health has unfortunately declined. We thank his son, Ken, for looking after him these recent years.



Geoff Turner
Secretary

5. May meeting - AGM

The Society's Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 2nd May 2024 at 19.45 at Croydon Bowling club.



The Agenda is as follows:

1. Apologies for absence
2. Remembering absent friends.
3. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
4. Financial statement and presentation of Accounts for 2023/2024
5. Membership fees for next season
6. Vote of thanks to retiring officers, committee member and verifiers
7. Proposed Rule changes - Discuss the proposed new Rules as circulated with the April Croydon Ray - *To be decided by a vote.*
8. Nomination for appointment of Steve Maguire as a Life Vice President for services to the Society. Proposed by David Roper and seconded by Geoff Turner. *To be voted upon.*
9. Nomination for the appointment of David Roper as a Vice President for service to the Society. Proposed by Steve Maguire and seconded by David Norman. *To be voted upon.*
10. Officer and Committee appointments (all current appointees willing to stand again)
 - a. Patron - David Gowers JP MSA, LVP
 - b. President – David Roper (VP-pending approval in Item 9 above)
 - c. Chairman – David Norman MSA
 - d. Vice Chairman – Tony Sheppard
 - e. Secretary and Safeguarding – Geoff Turner
 - f. Treasurer and Membership – Steve Maguire
 - g. Committee members
 - h. Jamie Beale – Social Media
 - i. Steve Watson – Editor of the Ray, RA Delegate and Website management
 - j. Peter Crichlow – RA Delegate
 - k. Gareth Mays – Supplies Officer
 - l. Steve Tyler

To be voted upon.

 - h. Appointment of Verifier (s) *To be voted upon*
 - i. Any other business – notified to the Chairman before the meeting.

6. *Var or not var, that is the question*

Since its introduction, VAR has steadily been responsible for some game changing decisions. Every Club/Country has gained or suffered from the Refs in a box reviewing an on field decision or unnoticed incident.

It's also thrown up the question as to whether Referees understand the physicality of playing in terms of body position, actual physics/anatomy of jumping or stretching to challenge.

It's also, to some extent, re-designing the Laws of the Game like offside and handball as it takes an inordinate time to get an outcome.



In terms of the physical act of leaping for headers the body, specifically arms, are used to gain leverage. Or are they? The power in jumping comes from the legs the arms can't actually help gain height as they aren't physically designed that way, unlike a birds wings. It is generally accepted that they will be used in a wing like way and usually are close to the trunk in a bent arm. If you're running forward and leaping physics determines you will have forward momentum and naturally the speed from the run will enable a better height gain.

Conversely, if you are stood still and jump up the height you gain, even using your arms will not be as great as the running jump. Why is it that VAR, or even on field Refs, determine that an attacker running to head a cross then meets the static defensive jump as the two collide mid air is usually a free kick to the defender?

We often see this type of challenge at corners, the ball sails over the heads of the two players and a free kick is awarded based on perceived illegal contact.

In the Fulham v Newcastle game this exact incident occurred, challenge was Dan Burn (6ft 7in) v Calvin Bassey (6ft 1in). The heights are important because even stood next to each other Burn is going to be taller than his opponent meaning he has an inbuilt advantage. Add the jumping mechanics described above that advantage is increased. In this case Burn was at least 2ft higher in the air than Bassey. Neither got the ball as it arced about 2 foot over Burn. Burns arms were in a natural position in front of him as he collided with Bassy.

Referee, Sam Allison, gave the goal. Had a decent view of the incident and deemed it no foul. VAR reviewed the goal, and referred Sam to the monitor. After a second viewing which included the still of the contact reversed his on field decision. He should've stuck with his on field decision as it was correct.

It has become common practice with elite Referees to reverse on field decisions when referred to the monitor. WHY?

Sam had a good game but that one VAR interference put a dampener on his overall game. It highlighted a lack of understanding, generally within elite Referees, of how such incidents are subject to physics and anatomy.

It throws up the question "would elite Referees benefit from training about the physics/anatomy of jumping?" I think they would because the vast majority of Referees at elite level have never played football to a level where they would understand such issues and therefore don't view them through the lens of experience.

Similarly with offside where it applies to an attacker standing in an offside position against the goalkeeper. Wolves v West Ham. Wolves player is in an offside position in front of the keeper, ball comes over Killan jumps and heads it into far corner away from Flabianski, who can see the ball in flight and s'more than capable of judging its likely dropping zone, yet chooses to stay in position.

VAR ruled the goal out for offside, interfering with the goalkeeper. Why? Because the wording of the Law means it was not a legitimate goal.

Is it time for that specific aspect of Law to be reviewed ? I think it is.

A keeper in that position, unless there is physical barriers to their free movement, I.e. player blocks it or crowd of players prevents keeper getting into better position. Then the Keeper has to make a better decision to defend that ball. Simply standing still isn't, and shouldn't be, accepted as a reason to disallow a goal.

If VAR is to continue, as it appears to be here for the foreseeable, then FIFA/PGMOL need to look at how they can help Referees better interpret what they are reviewing in heading/jumping situations. They also need to make the auto offside aspect of VAR compulsory across all FA bodies.

There also needs to be more conviction from on field Refs when reviewing at the monitor to stand by their decision, after all, they are still in charge of that match NOT VAR.

Hopefully, IFAB will sort the offside out but I doubt it.

Les Johnstone

7. You are the Ref

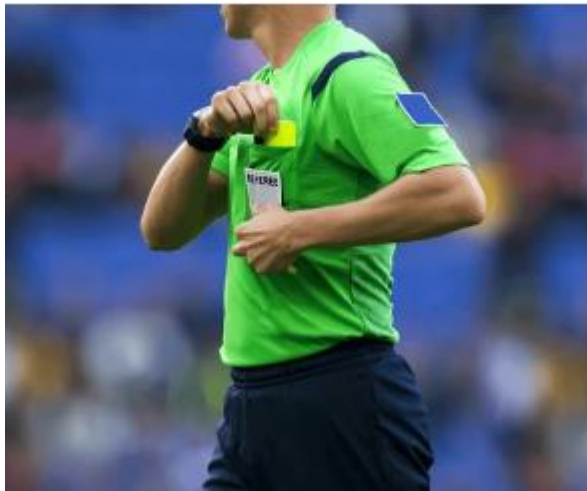
Here's five questions to test you this Month

Q1. The ball goes completely over a touch line. Before the throw-in is taken a player strikes an opponent with excessive force. What decision should the referee make?

- (a) The referee sends off the offending player for violent conduct and awards an indirect free kick from where the ball was at the time of the striking.
- (b) The referee sends off the offending player for violent conduct and awards a direct free kick from the touch line.
- (c) The referee sends off the offending player for violent conduct and awards a throw-in.
- (d) None of the answers is correct.

Q2. If a player changes places with the goalkeeper without prior permission from the referee, is it necessary to stop the game?

- (a) Yes
- (b) It is not necessary, as long as the new goalkeeper is not controlling the ball with any part of his hands or arms.
- (c) It is at the discretion of the referee.
- (d) No, play continues until the next stoppage when both players are cautioned.



Q3. A defending player moves beyond his own goal line in order to place an opponent in an offside position. What decision should the referee make?

- (a) The referee cautions the defender for unsporting behaviour.
- (b) The referee allows play to continue if advantage can be applied and penalises the defender for unsporting behaviour at the next stoppage in play.
- (c) The referee allows play to continue if advantage can be applied and cautions the defender for deliberately leaving the field of play without his permission during the next stoppage in play.
- (d) The referee allows play to continue.

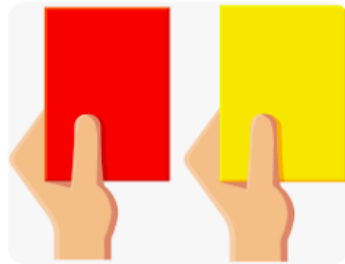
Q4. A player takes a throw-in incorrectly and the referee believes that the player threw the ball at an opponent with excessive force. What decision should the referee make?

- (a) The referee sends off the offending player and awards a direct free kick from where the offence occurred.

(b) The referee sends off the offending player and awards a throw-in to the opposing team.

(c) The referee sends off the offending player and awards a new throw-in to the same team.

(d) The referee sends off the offending player and awards a dropped ball.



Q5. A player plays in a dangerous manner by raising his leg up above his shoulders when an opponent tries to head the ball. The referee...

(a) penalises the player`s team with a direct free kick or penalty kick.

(b) penalises the player`s team with a direct free kick or penalty kick for violent conduct.

(c) penalises the player`s team with a direct free kick or penalty kick for serious foul play.

(d) penalises the player`s team with an indirect free kick.

8. Membership renewals - 1 June 2024

As previously advised, the RA membership year will now run from 1st June to 31st May with effect from 1st June 2024.

The membership renewal process will be commencing immediately after the AGM so Stephen Maguire will be e-mailing you later in May.

We ask that you assist him in completing the renewal process ESPECIALLY if you are intending officiating in summer tournaments or pre-season friendlies.

9. Gravesend RA

As a referee on the Orpington & Bromley District Sunday football league since 2009 I received a general invite to a Gravesend RA meeting. Guest Speaker was Steve Bennett of whom I was very lucky to line for in an OBDSFL Senior Match in 2015. Their normal turnout of 15 was boosted by just 5, which shows you how societies are struggling even with top speakers. Steve was a premier league referee between 1993 and 2010 and currently observes at level 2b.



It was a great evening, he has such a presence. He started with first impressions, then covered application of law and then discussed clips regarding position and movement. We saw further clips on law and then more clips on DOGSO and SPA (stops a promising attack). I was made to feel very welcome by Gravesend members. The thing I will mostly take away from the evening is "What does law say".

Steve Watson

10. Surrey Cup Finals



A reminder that as a Surrey Referee, you can go to any of the finals at no cost, played from mid April into May. Ive been to one in both of the last two seasons, both played at Meadeowbank, Dorking. Check out the Surrey website to get a list of finals and dates and then contact Surrey FA who can book you in. There are still five to be played on the 8th, 9th, 14th, 15th and 16th May.

If you have any comments or future content please email me the editor at

stephenwatson1616@gmail.com

11. Answers

Answers to You are the Ref (7 above)

1 – c, 2 – d, 3 – c, 4 - b, 5 - d

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